

# THE VICTIMS' VOICE

Summer 2016 Newsletter



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## ADVOCATE'S CORNER



Natasha M. Pierre, Esq.

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) kicked off Spring with the National Crime Victims' Rights Week on April 11-16, 2016. The week began in the Legislative Office Building concourse where information about crime victims' rights, resources and services was provided by staff from the OVA, the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formerly CONNSACS), the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Mothers United Against Violence, the Office of Victim Services, and Survivors of Homicide. The OVA, in partnership with the Central Connecticut State University Ruth Boyea Women's Center, held a public hearing where crime victims told the OVA, the Commissioner of the Department of Correction, and the Executive Directors of the Office of Victim Services, the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence, and Survivors of Homicide about their positive and negative experiences while practicing their constitutional rights during the criminal justice process as a crime survivor. The OVA rounded out the week with the Second Annual 5k Race and Unity Walk with Mothers United Against Justice.

In April, the Office of the Victim Advocate and the Connecticut Coalition against Domestic Violence (CCADV) were presented with a \$2,000 donation from the Brooklyn Correctional Institution's Brooklyn Cares Program. The program, run by the Department of Correction (DOC) and five prisoners, sells snacks to inmates and the proceeds are donated to organizations.

The Brooklyn Cares donation helped supplement the OVA's funding of the update and printing of 10,000 *Domestic Violence Best*

*Practices Cards* to be distributed to all police departments across the state.

*Pictured: State Victim Advocate, Natasha M. Pierre, Acting Warden William Colon, CCADV Director of Public Policy and Communications Liza Andrews, and DOC Staff member Louise Downer. Not pictured: Linda Trahan and Vanessa Torres.*

## Brooklyn Cares



Brooklyn Correctional Institution



# Partners At Work: Highlighting CT Service Providers



The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence formerly known as CONNSACS has been the state's leading voice to end sexual violence for over thirty years. The

OVA is highlighting their work in this issue and interviewed Laura Cordes, Executive Director of the Alliance.

Ms. Cordes has worked in the anti-sexual violence movement since 1999 and is the executive director of Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence.



With over 20 years' experience in public policy and victim advocacy, Ms. Cordes has advanced numerous women's health care initiatives and has been instrumental in the adoption of legislative and administrative policies that have improved the immediate response to victims of sexual violence throughout the health care, criminal justice, and higher education systems.

## About The Alliance

For over thirty years, we have been the state's leading voice to end sexual violence. We have a committed staff and statewide coalition of nine community-based sexual assault crisis programs. Together we provide survivor-centered advocacy and services for women, men, and children. We drive public policy efforts that improve the response to victims and survivors and to increase offender accountability. Through our prevention education and training programs we are changing harmful cultural attitudes and empowering communities to take action to prevent sexual violence. We do not do this work alone and are fortunate to have many state and community partners who work with

us to address sexual violence.

## What prompted the name change of the organization?

Our new name, Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (The Alliance) reflects who we are, what we do, and what we aim to do. Changing our name came about as a collective desire among our member programs, partners, staff, board and many survivors to adopt a name that best represents the scope of our work, our partnerships and our goals. While we have changed our name, our mission remains the same: to end sexual violence and ensure high-quality, comprehensive, and culturally competent sexual assault victim services.

## What obstacles do you face?

We never turn a victim away. Though we have a large and growing network of community partners, we are often stretched beyond capacity to reach and meet the needs of all survivors. Funding from individuals as well as municipal, state and the federal government is vital to upholding and expanding no cost services and advocacy. Amidst the growing state deficit, it remains challenging for our non-profit network to secure the funds needed to meet the growing demand for services for the child, adolescent and adult victims who turn to us for help. Individuals can help by organizing an event, volunteering at a member program or making a contribution.

## Where can CT improve?

We are finally having rich state and national discussions about the problem of sexual assault and what we need to do to end it. We have passed some strong state laws in recent years including one of the nation's most comprehensive laws addressing campus sexual violence, as well as those which establish civil protective orders for sexual assault victims, clear time frames for the transfer and testing of all sexual assault evidence collection kits, and a requirement for all schools to provide K-12 sexual abuse aware-

ness and prevention programming. These are great steps forward, but we still have work to do to reach all survivors especially those from historically marginalized communities who experience sexual violence at higher rates, and often face more barriers to accessing services and system for healing and justice. We need to counter victim blaming and to change the attitudes that allow offending behavior. Our prevention programs and trainings, which help people to learn about the ways that they might inadvertently contribute to cultural factors that normalize sexual violence and what they can do to help prevent it in their communities, are one way to achieve this.

## What do you want our readers to know most?

Two things. First, sexual violence is traumatic for survivors and impacts them in numerous ways. How we respond matters and can make the difference in whether or not a survivor feels supported and can access the services they deserve to rebuild the trust and control that has been robbed from them. Our hotlines are available to survivors and their family members and friends 24/7. Even if it happened a long time ago, even if the offender was someone the victim knew, even if the survivor never told anyone, help is available and we are here to help.

Second, sexual violence is not inevitable. It is preventable and everyone has a role in ending it. Professional development and prevention education and awareness programs are available for organizations and individuals. Contact The Alliance or one of our member centers to arrange for a presentation or training for your agency, and/or community or civic group. [www.endsexualviolencect.org](http://www.endsexualviolencect.org)

## Contact The Alliance:

Office: 860-282-9881

Hotline: 1-888-999-5545 English

Hotline: 1-888-568-8332 Spanish

[www.endsexualviolencect.org](http://www.endsexualviolencect.org)



## ☑ Mark your calendar - Upcoming Events:

**June 15-16:** Melanie Ilene Rieger Memorial Conference

Contact: [www.melanieriegerconference.com](http://www.melanieriegerconference.com)

**July 19:** CRT Tee Off with Women to End Domestic Violence

For additional information contact: (860) 560-5471 or email [nancys@crtct.org](mailto:nancys@crtct.org)

**July 30:** Survivors of Homicide 6th Annual Golf Tournament - [www.survivorsofhomicide.com](http://www.survivorsofhomicide.com)

## Available Trainings

*The Office of the Victim Advocate provides training sessions geared toward raising awareness about the rights and services available to victims of crime in Connecticut.*

*Some training topics include:*

- ***The Office of The Victim Advocate:*** *This training focuses on the role and duties of the agency. Highlights the laws regarding crime victims' rights and the issues they face in the criminal justice system.*
- ***U & T Visa Training:*** *This training focuses on the process of completing and certifying the necessary paperwork for U & T Visa requests. This training is for attorneys, and police officers that act as "certifying" officers for the purpose of processing U & T Visa requests.*
- ***Orders of Restitution:*** *This training outlines eligibility requirements and the process to request an order of restitution from the court.*
- ***Senior Community Awareness Training:*** *This training focuses on issues senior communities may face and ways to prevent becoming a victim of crime.*
- ***Legislative Aide Training :*** *This training focuses on the services and resources available to Connecticut crime victims. This training is for legislative aides and provides resources that can be shared with constituents.*
- ***Internet safety:*** *This training addresses sexting, bullying and online harassment. Learn tips to help educate youth regarding the serious nature and risks associated with participation in such activities.*

## Did you know?\_\_\_\_\_

If you are a crime victim you might receive a phone call from the public defender, investigator or an attorney representing the defendant to ask questions or seek input as it relates to the criminal matter at hand. You do not have to speak to them if you do not want to.

**Have questions? Contact our office: Call Toll Free 1-888-771-3126 or 860-550-6632**





**E**very year in April, the country observes National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW). This year's theme—***Serving Victims. Building Trust. Restoring Hope.***—underscores the importance of early intervention and victim services in establishing trust with victims, which in turn begins to restore their hope for healing and recovery.

The State of Connecticut Office of The Victim Advocate (OVA), spearheaded events throughout the week to promote and share this year's theme.

## MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2016 - LOB CONCOURSE

*Participants:* The Office of the Victim Advocate, the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formerly CONNSACS), the Connecticut Coalition to End Domestic Violence, the Department of Correction Victim Services Unit, Mothers United Against Violence, the Office of Victim Services, and Survivors of Homicide.



## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016 - PUBLIC HEARING



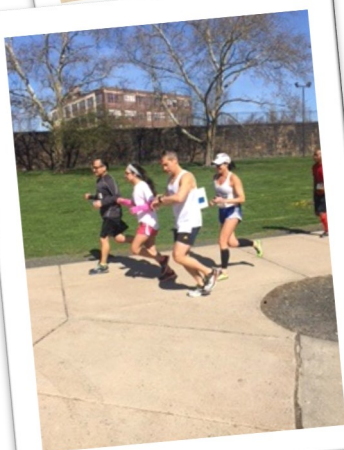
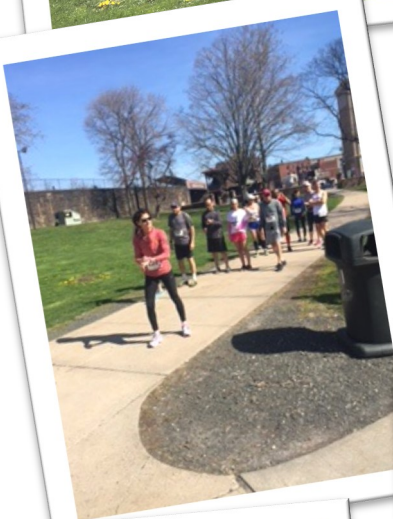
**O**n Wednesday, April 13th The Office of The Victim Advocate in partnership with the Central CT State University Ruth Boyea Women's Center held a public hearing at Central CT State University. The hearing was held to evaluate the services and state of crime victims rights in CT. The panel comprised of representatives from leading victim service agencies included: The Office of the Victim Advocate, the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formerly CONNSACS), the Department of Correction, the Office of Victim Services, and Survivors of Homicide.

2<sup>nd</sup> Annual

# 5k RUN & UNITY WALK

**SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2016**

*The Office of The Victim Advocate held its  
2nd Annual 5k Run & Unity Walk at The Bushnell Park in Hartford, CT.*



**SAVE THE DATES!**  
**NCVRW April 2-8, 2017**



# 2016 Legislative Session Update



The list of bills below were passed this legislative session.

[House Bill No. 5054](#), an Act Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence  
Requires a respondent of an ex-parte restraining order to surrender firearms within 24 hours of notice of the order. **Effective: October 1, 2016**

[Senate Bill No. 213](#), An Act Concerning the Inheritance Rights of a Beneficiary or Survivor Who is Found Not Guilty of Murder or Manslaughter by Reason of Mental Disease or Defect Prohibits a person from benefiting from their actions that caused the death of another by barring them from being able to receive insurance benefits or inheritance from the estate of the deceased when: the person is found guilty of manslaughter in the second degree or manslaughter in the second degree with a firearm, or the person is found not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect. **Effective: October 1, 2016**

[Senate Bill No. 349](#), An Act Concerning the Privacy of a Minor  
Includes the recording of a minor, created by the use of a police body camera, among those recordings that are not disclosable pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). **Effective: from passage**

[House Bill No. 5289](#), An Act Concerning Protective Services for Vulnerable Persons  
Requires the Commission on Aging to evaluate protective services for elderly persons in the state and submit recommendations. **Effective: from passage**

[House Bill No. 5366](#), An Act Concerning Court Operations  
Allows the court in a restraining order hearing to consider additional information from the Judicial Branch's family services unit report, including existing or prior orders of protection, information on pending or past criminal cases in which the respondent was convicted of a violent crime, pending arrest warrants and a respondent's level of risk based on a risk assessment tool utilized by Court Support Services Division.  
**Effective: from passage**

[House Bill No. 5376](#), An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent and Consent for the Care and Treatment of College Students who are the Victim of Sexual Assault  
Requires institutions of higher education to adopt a policy that utilizes "affirmative consent" as the standard for investigating sexual assaults on campus. Additionally, it requires disclosure regarding the investigation and disciplinary process for sexual assaults on campus. **Effective: July 1, 2016**

[House Bill No. 5605](#), An Act Concerning the Termination of Parental Rights  
Permits the court to terminate the parental rights of a person who committed sexual assault that resulted in the conception of a child. **Effective: July 1, 2016**

[House Bill No. 5621](#), An Act Concerning Human Trafficking  
Enhances protections for human trafficking victims by: prohibiting a person age 16 or 17 from being convicted of prostitution; expanding criminal charges to include penalties for those that entice or patronize 16 or 17 year olds into prostitution; allowing the court to impose a standing criminal protective order; requiring each state's attorney and municipal police chief to annually report information on trafficking cases, and; requiring hotels, motels, inns and similar lodging operators to maintain records of all guest transactions for six (6) months and provide training to its employees. **Effective: October 1, 2016**

[House Bill No. 5642](#), An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee designates the Victim Advocate as a member of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC). **Effective: January 1, 2017**

# Summer months are here!

## Make sure to take steps to protect yourself and loved ones from being a possible target!



### **Opportunity makes the thief!**

#### **PROTECT YOURSELF!**

- Keep all doors locked!
  - Trim Bushes and trees from entries and lower windows
  - Get to know your neighbors
  - Don't leave valuables in plain sight
- Don't advertise large purchases at the curb
  - Report suspicious activity

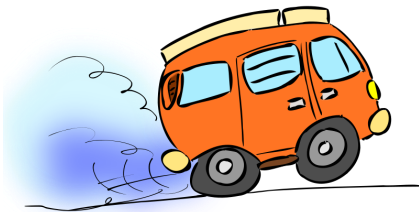
### **Monitor your children's internet activity:**

SHARE THESE **SMART** TIPS! Talk to your children about internet safety!

- **SAFE:** Keep safe by being careful not to give out personal information—such as your full name, email address, phone number, home address, photos, or school name—to people you are chatting with online.
- **MEETING:** Meeting someone you met online can be DANGEROUS! If someone is pressuring to meet tell an adult.
- **ACCEPTING:** Accepting emails, instant messages or opening files of picture or texts from people you don't know or trust can lead to problems—these messages may contain a virus!
- **RELIABLE:** Information you find on the internet may not be true, or someone online may be lying about who they are.
- **TELL:** Tell your parent or trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried. This can be inappropriate messages, photos or online bullying.



### **Vehicle Safety!**



- Keep vehicle locked at all times
- Don't leave any valuables in plain sight
- Make sure the windows are up enough to prevent any person from unlocking your car.
- LOOK before you LOCK! Be sure not to leave any pets or children unattended in a car especially on a hot day.



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